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The Doctrine of St. Augustine on Sense Knowledge

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THE DOCTRINE OF ST. AUGUSTINE ON SENSE KNOWLEDGE

by

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LIFE

Daniel M. O'Malley, O.S.M. was born in Chicago, Illinois, July 5, 1921.

He was graduated from St. Philip High School, Chicago, Illinois, June, 1939, and entered the Servite Order in September, 1939. He received his education at Mater Dolorosa Seminary, Hillside, Illinois, Mount St. Philip, Granville, Wisconsin, and Loyola University.

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PREFACE

The author wishes to express his appreciation to Father J. J. O'Callaghan, S.J. of Loyola University, for his aid in the composition of this thesis, and to Monsignor Harry C. Koenig, Librarian of the Feehan Memorial Library, St. Mary of the Lake Seminary, for making available the research facilities of that institution.

The translations of the texts of St. Augustine are the author's own, unless otherwise noted. The symbol PL in the footnotes to the thesis refers to J. P. Migne's Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina, Paris, 1884-1864; reprint of edition of Benedictines of St. Maur, Paris, 1679-1700, in tomes 32-47.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The object of this paper is an examination of St. Augustine's doctrine on knowledge obtained through the senses. This exposition of St. Augustine's doctrine will be presented in a manner calculated to give the interested reader a summary of what takes place when man becomes aware of the various objects of this material world.

St. Augustine's theory of knowledge through the senses will at first appear strange to ears attuned to the traditional Thomistic theses. As one realizes, however, the role of sense knowledge in the philosophy of St. Augustine, he cannot fail to note a resemblance, at least in end, to the views of St. Thomas. For Augustine, sense knowledge was a step in the ascent of the soul to God. For St. Thomas as well, sense knowledge led man to God. That ascent, described as the Platonic highway traveled by Augustine, leads from the material to the immaterial, and then, within the immaterial, from the mutable to the immutable.[1]

That sense knowledge was for St. Thomas as well as St. Augustine, a step in the ascent of the soul to God, is equally clear. Man is so constituted that he must acquire his knowledge by way of abstraction from the

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1 De Civitate Dei, VIII, 6; PL 41, 231-232.

presentations of his senses.[2] In realising that sensible things give glory to God, "man looking to sensible things, affords those things the opportunity of making their due contribution to the formal extrinsic glory of God," and draws closer to his Creator and Lord.[3]

But here the similarity ends. For the background and attitude of St. Augustine differs from that of St. Thomas. Therefore, the importance of sense knowledge and its analysis will differ in the philosophies of the two men. It is not intended at this point to offer a comparison of the views of these two great doctors. What is intended here, is simply to affirm the real difference between the two men regarding sense cognition, despite an apparent similarity of end. This paper will be limited to a presentation of St. Augustine's view of the question.

Sensation was not a great problem for St. Augustine. In fact, "where the mind of man is directly open to the intelligibility of reality itself, Augustine has transcended the problem of sensation by as much as he has transcended matter in the world."[4] Certainly the Augustinian man is freer of sensation than the Thomistic man. This follows from the fact that the world of St. Augustine is freer from matter than is the world of St. Thomas. The problem of the origin of knowledge is simply not a problem for

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2 S. T., I, q. 84, a. 7, Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, ed. Anton C. Pegis, New York, 1945, I, 808.

3 John D. McKian, "The Raison D'Etre of the Human Composite," The New Scholasticism, XVIII, January, 1944, 64.

4 Anton C. Pegis, "The Mind of St. Augustine," Mediaeval Studies, VI, 1944, 32.

Augustine, for his world is too much the intelligible one, just as his man is too much a mind.

St. Augustine, however, realized that the creatures of this world would lead him to God:

> In this way, that which is known of God He made manifest to them, for the invisible things of Him are clearly seen by them, being understood by the things that are made; His power also and divinity. By Him also were all the visible and temporal things created.[5]

and, therefore, does offer certain views as to how man becomes aware of the sensible creatures of the world. This is not to say that St. Augustine concerned himself with an elaboration of a theory of knowledge for its own sake or as a propaedeutic to metaphysics.[6] To speak of an Augustan epistemology in this sense would be erroneous. For him, truth is to be sought, not for purely academic purposes, but as a means of possessing happiness. Man knows his own weaknesses and reaches for something greater than himself, something that will bring him the peace and happiness that he is seeking. But man must have knowledge of that object before he is able to possess it. Knowledge, for its own sake, then, is foreign to St. Augustine's way of thinking. It is useless if it does not lead to happiness.

> Listen first to the common aim of all philosophers... It is characteristic of all philosophers that, through their study, inquiry, discussion, their very life, they have sought to come to possess a happy life. This alone was the cause of their philosophising. Furthermore, I think that even this search the philosophers have in common

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5 De Civitate Dei, VIII, 6; PL 41, 232. The translation is by Anton C. Pegis.

6 Frederick Copleston, S.J., A History of Philosophy, II, Burns Oates, London, 1950, 51.

> with us. For if I should ask you why you believe in Christ, and why you have become Christians, every man will answer truthfully by saying; for the sake of a happy life. The pursuit of a happy life is common to philosophers and to Christians.[7]

No one can be said to be happy who does not possess what he strives to possess, so that the man who is seeking for truth, but has not yet found it, cannot be said to be truely happy.[8] Augustine himself tells of his search for truth. Countless generations of readers of the Confessiones know of his longing, despair, and final triumph in the possession of Truth which alone brought true happiness. For Augustine, the search for truth meant the search for Christ.

> This way all desire, this is what we all desire, truth and life. Yet, to this great possession...what is the way? ...Wherefore our Lord has said: I am the Way...You were seeking your destination: I am the Truth and the Life. You will not err if you go to Him through Him.[9]

In this search for truth St. Augustine is well aware of the part that sensible reality will play, for "wherever you go Wisdom speaks to you by certain traces of Himself, which He has impressed on His works."[10] He does not, however, devote much time or effort to the mutable objects of sense. Consequently, in his estimation man's knowledge of sensible reality occupies a position secondary to his knowledge of eternal truths.

St. Augustine's philosophical views as a while are nowhere coherently set forth. Early in his life, ethical and metaphysical inquiries were

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7 Sermo CL, 3, 4; PL 38, 809. Trans. by Pegis.

8 De Beata Vita, 2, 10; PL 32, 964.

9 Sermo CL, 8, 10; PL 38, 814. Trans. Pegis.

10 De Libero Arbitrio II, 11, 32; PL 32, 1258.

thrown aside for pressing doctrinal controversies. As a result, points of purely philosophical interest are henceforth to be found embedded in the theological and exegetical treatises. They are scattered widely through the enormous compass of his works. It is necessary, therefore, to examine many and varied works if one is to obtain a comprehensive view of a single point of his doctrine. Such a mixtrue of philosophical and theological themes may appear strange today, but it must be remembered that Augustine, as well as the other Fathers and early Christian writers, made no clear distinction between these two provinces. Augustine regarded Christian wisdom as a whole, and in his penetration of the Christian faith he tried to see all reality in the light of Christian wisdom.

An investigation of the nature of sense knowledge, therefore, demands an examination of such diverse works as De Musica, De Quantitate Animae, De Immortalitate Animae, De Genesi ad Litteram, Confessiones, and De Trinitate.

In addition to these primary sources, certain general studies in St. Augustine's philosophy will be used. An indispensable work is Professor Gilson's Introduction a l'Etude de Saint Augustin. Two excellent studies in English are available: Professor Pegis' article in Mediaeval Studies, "The Mind of St. Augustine," and Professor Bourke's Augustine's Quest for Wisdom. Besides these general studies, two collections will be used in the preparation of this paper: A Monument to St. Augustine, and Acta Hebdomadae Augustinianae-Thomisticae. Most of the texts pertinent to the question have been collected by Father Leo W. Keeler, S.J. in his Sancti Augustini Doctrina De Cognitione.

Another valuable analysis of Augustine's thought is contained in Realists and Nominalists by Professor Meyrick H. Carre.

In a rather brief article published in The Modern Schoolman,[11] Father C. J. McNaspy discusses the question under the title "Augustine on Sensation." His first observation is that an understanding of his theory of sensation will enable one to grasp the distinctive note in his concept of man. After citing Augustine's definition of sensation, and the fundamental principle that the body in no way acts on the soul, he states the solution as it is contained in the sixth book of De Musica. The article ends with a remark on the influence of Augustine's solution on various philosophers of the middle ages.

The plan to be followed in this presentation of Augustine's doctrine of sense knowledge will include first, an analysis of his views on the nature of man. In order to understand the nature of sense knowledge in man, it is necessary to understand what man is. Is he soul alone, as some philosophers have believed, or is he a composite of soul and body, and if so, what is the nature of the relation between the two? The next point is an examination of the definition of sensation as Augustine states it in De Quantitate Animae. A statement of the limitations of sense knowledge and its division into sensation and perception will precede the analysis of sensation proper. This analysis will fall into three phases according to the division

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11 Clement J. McNaspy, "Saint Augustine on Sensation," The Modern Schoolman, XV, November, 1937, 6.

of F. J. Thonnard:[12] the phase of corporeal reception, the phase of vital reaction, and the phase of psychological organization. The last phase will include an analysis of perception as Augustine saw it. An attempt will then be made to describe these three phases in terms of Augustine's theory of numbers as applied to the hearing of a line of verse.[13]

The last section of this paper will be an effort to situate Augustine's account of sense knowledge in his philosophy as a whole. The paper will end with a notation of the influence of Augustine's solution on later philosophers.

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13 De Musica, VI, 2, 2; PL 32, 1163.

CHAPTER II

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

It would appear somewhat presumptuous, at first sight to speak of an Augustinian anthropology. The modern critic is apt to dismiss the suggestion of an Augustinian answer to the problem of man's nature as fanciful or, at best, inadequate. There is a basis for such a criticism, in as much as Augustine never adequately justified or explained the unity of man. The reason for this failure can be found in his Platonic background. According to Plato the soul, essentially the source of movement, is naturally endowed with life and, therefore, immortal. This argument is presented in great detail in the Phaedrus, 245 c 5. The Platonic soul is, then, quite independent of the body. In answer to the question: how are body and soul related, Plato proposes, in Alcibiades, 129e, an accidental juxtaposition. He was not overly concerned with the unity of the human composite. There was no problem for him; his man was primarily soul.

Augustine, on the other hand, was a Christian, believing that the union of body and soul is natural, and that salvation includes the body as well as the soul. Such a view demands that man be a substantial composite. There was no doubt in Augustine's mind that man was such a being. But, because of his Platonic background with its radical independence of soul, he

was unable to explain adequately the nature of the union of body and soul in man.[1]

What were Augustine's beliefs on the nature of man, his soul, body, and the union between the two? It is necessary to examine these in order to understand clearly his doctrine of sense knowledge. It is also necessary to bear in mind that it was the study of the Platonists that led him to a positive basis of knowledge. Thus his doctrine contains a Platonic vision of the world and a Platonic way of expressing its truth. This Platonic view will immediately color his explanation of sense knowledge, making possible, if not inevitable the doctrine of De Musica VI.

In his reply to the skeptics Augustine indicates that the soul knows that it is a thinking being, that it grasps its own reality.[2] In grasping its own reality, it knows not only that it lives, but also that its life is a life of understanding. This view is immediately reflected in his thought on the relation of soul and body. For St. Augustine, the question is to discover what is highest and most perfect within himself in order to pursue the higher—highest good.[3] This is the good which is above him, which he is seeking to possess. In other words, he is looking for the center of gravity in the human composite. When Augustine will define man, he will

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1 Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, trans. A. H. C. Downes, New York, 1936, 174-175.

2 De Beata Vita II, 7; PL 32, 963.
Soliloquia II, 1, 1; PL 32, 885.

3 Pegis, "The Mind of St. Augustine," Mediaeval Studies, VI, 40.

answer the question: how is man ordered and governed?[4]

What is man? In De Moribus Ecclesiae he answers:

> We are agreed that man is composed of soul and body. The question is: what is man? Of these two, is he the soul alone, or the body alone? For, although soul and body are two realities, and neither one of them would be called man unless the other were present...yet it is quite possible that one of them may be considered to be man, and to be so called.
>
> Well, which of them do we call man? (i) Is man soul-and-body, as in the case of a team of horses or a centaur? (ii) Or is man the body alone, which is in the service of the soul the rules it?...(iii) Or is man nothing other than what we call the soul, though we call it because of the body that it rules?...
>
> It is difficult to come to a conclusion in the foregoing discussion. And even if the reason could settle it easily, it would involve us in a lengthy discourse...For whether the pair together or the soul alone appropriates the name man, man's highest good is not whatever is the highest good of the body, but the highest good of man is whatever is the highest good for body-and-soul together or for the soul alone.[5]

These questions do not trouble St. Augustine in the least. He believes that man is made up of body and soul[6] and this is his Platonic way of stating that fact. Influenced as he was by the radical independence of the Platonic soul, Augustine is looking for that reality within himself which points to the good above himself. Neither can Augustine be accused of placing the whole essence of man in the soul alone. In fact he rather bluntly remarks that "anyone who wishes to separate the body from human nature is stupid."[7]

"Man, therefore, according to his own understanding of himself, is a rational soul using a mortal and earthly body."[8] In another work of the same period he declares: "The soul is a certain substance sharing in

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4 Ibid.

5 De Moribus Ecclesiae I, 4, 6; PL 32, 1313. Trans. Pegis.

6 In Psalm. 56, v. 2, n. 5; PL 36, 664.

7 De Anima et ejus Origine, IV, 2, 3; PL 44, 525.

reason and suited to the task of ruling the body."[9] It is to be noted concerning these two difinitions that the first defines man, while the second defines the soul. This is in keeping with St. Augustine's doctrine that man is what is best in himself. Finding what is best in himself, man will rise to the reality above himself. His purpose is not to exclude the body from membership in the human composite; it is rather to find the true and central man in the composite.[10] Later in De Trinitate Augustine will say that "man is a rational substance composed of soul and body." He is not denying what he said earlier, neither has he changed his point of view, rather he is seeking, as before, what is best in man. Speaking of Varro in De Civitate Dei, he says: "He rightly feels that there are two realities in the nature of man, namely, soul and body, and he does not in the least doubt that of the two the soul is the better and, by far, the more excellent reality."[11]

It is along these lines that Augustine describes what the soul is to the body. In one place he speaks of the soul as the habitatrix and the body the habitaculum.[12] He also refers to the soul as the rectrix of the body, "for God made the soul the director of the body, that it might serve the higher and rule over what is lower, that is, that it might serve God and

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9 De Quantitate Animae, XIII, 22; PL 32, 1048.

10 Pegis, "The Mind of St. Augustine," Mediaeval Studies, VI, 40.

11 De Civitate Dei XIX, 3; PL 41, 625.

12 Sermo 368, 1, 1; PL 39, 1652.

rule over the body."[13] And again, "in the order of nature, the soul is above the body, yet it is harder to rule than the body."[14] This residing of the soul, however, is without local position or diffusion, for the soul is incorporeal and must not be conceived as occupying space. The soul is present to the body by a certain vital attention. That is to say, it is present in its entirety to all parts of the body. It is the whole soul which perceives an impression even in the smallest point of the body, and, what is more, whatever is perceived, is perceived only in that part of the body where it takes place.[15]

> The whole soul perceives what is going on in one part of the body, but it does not perceive this in the whole body. Thus, when there is a pain in the foot, the eye looks at it, the mouth speaks of it, and the hand reaches for it. This would not be possible unless the soul were present in these parts in the same way as it senses in the foot...The The soul is, therefore, at one and the same time as a whole in each part of the body, just as it senses as a whole in each part.[16]

In his explanation of why this union takes place, Augustine declares that the soul naturally desires to be joined to the body. In other words "the soul is created with such a nature as to desire this, in the same way as it is natural to us to desire to live."[17] What is the motive in this desire? Apparently the soul enters the body as a messenger of light from the divine ideas. The soul is nearer to the divine ideas than is the body; it is

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13 De Actibus cum Felice Manichaeo II, 17; PL 42, 547.

14 De Civitate Dei XIV, 23; PL 41, 430.

15 Etienne Gilson, Introduction a l'Etude de saint Augustin, Paris, 1949, 60.

16 De Immortalitate Animae, 16, 25; PL 32, 1034.

17 De Genesi ad Litteram VII, 27, 38; PL 34, 369.

therefore more perfect than the body.[18]

The first result of the soul's entering the body is life, for

> it brings the body together into a unity and keeps it in unity, it prevents the body from breaking up and wasting away; it regulates the proper distribution of nourishment throughout the parts of the body; it preserves the apt arrangement and proportion of the body, not only to delight the eye but to grow and generate.[19]

And in another place Augustine declares that it is by the presence of the soul that the body lives—as long as the soul is present in the body, it is necessary that the body live.[20]

In addition to life, the soul coming into the body, brings form to the body. "It is only by the giving of form through the soul that the body is made to be what it is."[21]

One modern commentator expresses it in this way: the soul gives to the body subsistere...et esse in quantum est.[22] In support of this he cites the following:

> In this order, then, it is understood that form is given by the Supreme Essence through the soul to the body—the form whereby the latter exists, insofar as it exists.
>
> Hence, the body subsists through the soul and exists by the very fact that it is animated.[23]

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18 Pegis, "The Mind of St. Augustine," Mediaeval Studies, VI, 41.

19 De Quantitate Animae 33, 70; PL 32, 1074.

20 Sermo 141, 6; PL 32, 880.

21 De Immortalite Animae, 15; PL 32, 1033.

22 P. Hieronymus a Parisiis, O.M.C., "De Unione Animae cum Corpore in Doctrina D. Augustini," Acta Hebdomadae Augustinianae-Thomisticae, 1931, 281.

23 De Immortalitate Animae, 15; PL 32, 1033.

It is through the soul, therefore, that order, organisation and life come to the body. Divine ideas, soul, and body constitute a hierarchy which has as its purpose the transmission of organisation to matter. In this hierarchy the soul assumes a middle position, with the divine ideas immediately above it and the body immediately below. "There is nothing which comes between the highest life, which is immutable Wisdom and Truth, and that which is the last reality to receive life, namely, the body, except the soul."[24] It is Augustine's belief concerning the union of soul and body that it is the body which will be benefited by it. Nowhere does he suggest any need which the soul has in its nature and which this union with the body supplies.[25]

What is Augustine's teaching on the nature of this union of soul and body? In other words, how is the soul related to the body? That he was convinced of their union, there can be no doubt. But in attempting to explain or justify this union, Augustine's language is indefinite. "The manner in which spirits are united to bodies...is marvelous, and it exceeds the understanding of man."[26] Man is the result of this marvelous union of the spiritual and the material, occupying a middle position between the angels and the beasts; he is lower than the angels yet higher than the beasts, having mortality with the beasts, and reason with the angels; he is a rational mortal animal.[27] So wonderful is this union that it gives man a special

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24 De Immortalitate Animae, 15, 24; PL 32, 1033.

25 Pegis, "The Mind of St. Augustine," Mediaeval Studies, VI, 41.

26 De Civitate Dei XXI, 10; PL 41, 725.

27 De Civitate Dei IX, 13; PL 41, 267.

reason for giving praise to God.[28] This language indicates that Augustine was puzzled when attempting to explain the manner in which the soul is united to the body. He is convinced of the fact, but the explanation escapes him.

To sum up his doctrine: man is one being, composed of soul and body. The soul is a spiritual being and it knows that it is a thinking being. It is the center of gravity in the human composite looking to the higher good above itself. Augustine emphasizes this in his definition of man as a rational soul using a mortal and earthly body. The soul desires to be joined to the body and enters the body as a messenger from the divine ideas which are above it. It brings with it order, organization and life. The soul is present to every part of the body by what Augustine calls vital attention giving to the body its rights and its share in life and intelligibility, just as the soul in turn receives its light from the Source of all light and unity. The order, form and beauty of the body comes to it from the soul, which is in contact with the world of ideas. The soul is, therefore an intermediary between matter and the highest life, which in unchanging Wisdom and Truth. The chief consequence of this position is the failure to explain the nature of the union of soul and body.

It should be pointed out at this time that his Platonism involved him in further difficulties when he attempted to harmonize it with the Bible. He had to retract in later life language which suggested a soul of the world,

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28 De Genesi ad Litteram VII, 25; PL 34, 307.

and he never succeeded in hitting upon an explanation of the origin of the soul that did justice to the doctrine of Original Sin.[29] Some commentators accuse him of a form of traducianism.[30] However, the De Libero Arbitrio contains four hypotheses offered by Augustine: either every soul comes from the first soul created by God according to the divine plan, or God creates a special soul for each individual, or all souls pre-exist in God and are sent at a certain time to govern a body, or lastly they come into a body of their own accord. But, as Augustine makes clear, the soul is not a part of God, rather it is created by Him. Self knowledge reveals infirmity, whereas God is unchanging perfection, and as the soul cannot be dependent on matter it must be dependent by creation on God. Of the creation hypotheses Augustine seems to have preferred the firt, because, according to Genesis, God stopped creating on the sixth day.

From what has been said in this chapter it is clear that man is made up of two realities, soul and body. Of these two, the soul is the more important, for it brings form, organisation and life to the body. Now, "when two beings of unequal perfection are united in one whole, the nature of the less perfect is inclined to obey and to be moved, and the role of the more perfect is to command and to move, so that this relation of agent to patient constitutes an harmonious unity."[31] The body, on the one hand, belongs en-

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29 M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., "The Philosophy of St. Augustine," A Monument to Saint Augustine, London, 1930, 172.

30 Traducianism is the theory which explains the origin of the individual soul as the product of parental generation.

31 Thonnard, Precis d'Histoire de la Philosophie, 228.

tirely to the physical order, its parts subject to change and decay. The soul, on the other hand, is a vehicle of the spiritual order, simple, with the function, not only of animating the body but also of producing the different operations in man: vegetative and sensitive making use of the body, and intellectual by itself.

The first result of the superiority of the soul over the body is that the body can never act on the soul. Whatever acts is superior to that on which it is acting: therefore "we must not suppose that the body produces any effect on the soul, as though the soul, in the role of matter, is subjected to a body acting upon it."[32]

The consequence of this view will be immediately evident in his doctrine on sensation. Coupled with this first principle is the notion: all matter is inferior to that which works upon it. The conclusion is obvious: the soul is in no way subjected, as matter, to the activity of a bodily agency.[33] Guided by these principles, Augustine proposes an active theory of sensation which will be described in the following chapters.

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32 De Genesi ad Litteram XII, 16, 33; PL 34, 467. Translated by Pegis, "The Mind of St. Augustine," Mediaeval Studies, VI, 42. N.B. translates spiritus by soul.

33 De Musica VI, 5, 8; PL 32, 1167. Trans. Vernon Bourke, Augustine's Quest of Wisdom, Milwaukee, 1947, 111.

CHAPTER III

DEFINITION OF SENSATION

One of the most important stages in the development of Augustine's mind was the discovery of a reply to those philosophers who had challenged the validity of knowledge. It was through the writings of Cicero that the young Augustine felt the influence of the descendant of Pyrrho, the skeptic. According to Pyrrho, nothing is certain and, therefore, a suspension of judgement is the only prudent attitude to adopt. It was necessary, then, for Augustine to establish confidence in knowledge before he could advance towards the beliefs which his soul desired.

The argument that Augustine uses to establish the validity of knowledge is given in a number of passages in his works.[1] In substance Augustine argues that the process of doubting presumes the certain knowledge that something exists, namely, the doubter and his mental activities, and that the criticism of knowledge implies a criterion of truth. In Book IX of De Trinitate Augustine distinguishes between the origins of knowledge which comes through sensory images and the higher knowledge which comes through an immediate vision of the eternal truth within the soul. The former is termed

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1 De Trinitate X, 10, 14; PL 42, 981. Soliloquia, 2, 1; PL 32, 885. De Civitate Dei XI, 26; PL 41, 421.

Scientia. It is defined as the knowledge of temporal and changing things necessary for prosecuting the activities of this life. The latter is termed Sapientia. Its motive is contemplation and its objects the intelligible ideas.

This paper will be restricted to an examination of St. Augustine's doctrine on sense cognition which lies within the field of Scientia. The investigation, therefore, will begin with an analysis of his doctrine on sensation, progressing to the mind's inner faculty, "to which the bodily senses refer external objects."[2]

When St. Augustine gives a definition of sensation in De Quantitate Animae, it is entirely in keeping with his view of the relation of soul and body. "Sensation is an experience of the body which experience does not, through itself, escape the notice of the soul. Sensus sit passio corporis per seipsam non latens animam."[3] In the same work he says again: "I call sensation the soul's awareness of what the body experiences. Sensum puto esse non latere animam quod patitur corpus."[4] The latter definition, as Augustine demonstrates, is essentially incomplete. The point is that the most important element in these definitions of sensation is the non latere, that is, the awareness or non-ignorance on the part of the soul of what the body experiences. This definition appears in several of his works. Sometimes

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2 Confessiones VII, 17, 23; PL 32, 745.

3 De Quantitate Animae, 25, 48; PL 32, 1063.

4 Ibid., 23, 41; PL 32, 1060.

the wording is slightly altered, but the expression non latere is always present.

The non latere on the part of the soul gives the key to sense cognition in Augustine's doctrine, for it effectively demonstrates the character of this operation. The phrase passio non latens animam means that the experience undergone by the body suffices by itself to occasion sensation. But merely to occasion it, for certainly the passio corporis by itself is insufficient to cause sensation. The non latere of the soul is the essential feature of the process, as will be shown shortly.

Sometimes the soul finds itself placed in the state of non-ignorance by its own cognitive power and then one says that it has acquired knowledge, and sometimes it finds itself placed there by an experience which its body suffers and then one says that it has experienced a sensation.[5]

> Although sensation and knowledge are different, that 'not being unaware' is common to both, just as animal is common to men and the brute, although they differ very much. For, whatever is apparent to the soul, either through the condition of the body or through the purity of the intelligence, of that, the soul is not unaware. Sensation claims for itself the first way, knowledge, the other.[6]

Thus, for Augustine, sensation is an activity of the soul, which by means of the impression produced from without on its body, becomes conscious of the sensible world by forming in itself a representative image of it.[7] His neo-Platonic heritage is evident. "For Plotinus", says Father

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5 Gilson, Introduction a l'Etude de saint Augustin, 75.

6 De Quantitate Animae 30, 58; PL 32, 1068.

7 Thonnard, Precis d'Histoire de la Philosphie, 229.

Boyer, "the soul feels because it grasps itself in creating the sensible object, for Augustine the soul feels because it grasps itself in producing an image of the sensible object."[8]

In this discussion of St. Augustine's definition of sensation two points should be emphasized. First, concerning the sensible object, its nature can no longer be conceived as excluding all sensation and sensibility. Sensible things contain within themselves the occasion of sensation. On the other hand, sensation pertains entirely to the soul without the body's acting in any way: sentire non est corporis sed animae per corpus. This is the problem of sensation for Augustine. He has referred sense cognition exclusively to the soul, but at the same time the body is the occasion of it, adding that it is impossible for the body to exercise any effect on the soul. This, then, is the paradox to which the problem is reduced: how to explain sensible cognition, if it is true that it depends on the body as occasion, notwithstanding the fact that it is impossible for the body to act on the soul.

The problem appears in various works of St. Augustine, but it is in the De Musica that he handles it most convincingly and with great detail of analysis. In this work Augustine examines the laws which regulate harmony and rhythm. The last book contains an explanation of the perception of meter in poetry, illustrated with the familiar line of St. Ambrose, Deus Creator Omnium. From this example of rhythm he develops the

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8 Charles Boyer, S.J., L'idee de verite dans la philosophie de saint Augustin, Paris, 1921, 171.

question of sensation, carefully analysing what happens in the concrete instance of hearing the recitation of the line of verse.

As mentioned previously this analysis of sensation will be based on the threefold division suggested by Father Thonnard. The following chapter will describe the first phase of this activity known as sensation.

CHAPTER IV

THE PHASE OF CORPOREAL RECEPTION

The first phase or phase of corporeal reception is based on an understanding of the passive nature of the body. The body has for its role in sensation the receiving of innumerable impressions of other bodies upon itself. "Any physical objects which penetrate or press on the body from outside, affect not the soul but the body only, so as to hinder or promote its functions."[1] And in Book XI of De Trinitate St. Augustine gives an account of vision in which the role of the sense of sight is described in more passive terms.

> Vision is produced from a thing that is visible; but not from that alone, unless there be present also one who sees. Wherefore, vision is produced from something visible and someone seeing, in such a way, indeed, that on the part of him who sees there is the sense of the eyes and the intention of looking at and observing the object. Yet that information of the sense, which is called vision, is imprinted only by the body which is seen, that is, by some visible thing; and if this is taken away, no form remains of that which was in the sense so long as that which was seen was present. Yet the sense itself remains which existed also before anything was perceived...[2]

It is therefore apparent that the function of the body is of a passive nature. Its role is the receiving of impressions from other bodies or forces. The body is constantly receiving these impressions but most of them are received without the body's being aware of them. These impressions

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1 De Musica VI, 5, 9; PL 32, 1168.

2 De Trinitate XI, 2, 2; PL 42, 985.

register with effect only in the more delicate parts, that is to say, in those parts apt to receive them. In other words, only those impressions which modify the sense organs register with effect in the body. In the passage from De Trinitate cited above Augustine has described the sense of vision. He adds in the next sentence, by way of explanation, that the visible object "produces a form, its own likeness, which comes to be in the sense, when we perceive anything by seeing." Thus: "Gignit tamen formam velut similitudinem suam, quae fit in sensu cum aliquid videndo sentimus."[3] The sense of vision is informed, impressed, with the image of the body seen. This modification takes place in the body, and, through the body, in the soul. The organ of vision, like that of hearing and the other senses, consists of more delicate parts than the rest of the body and is consequently better adapted to receive easily suitable impressions or to act against foreign influences.

In Book III of De Genesi ad Litteram Augustine speaks of the physiology of sensation in relation to the four elements. The theory he offers in this work is suggestive of the Timaeus of Plato. According to Augustine, fire pertains to the eyes, air to the ears, and water to the powers of smell and taste. When the wet humor is distended and mixed with air, it belongs to the olfactory sense. In its flued or heavier form water pertains to the sense of taste. The binding element of all these, however, is fire which causes them to move. The last of the five senses which

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3 De Trinitate XI, 2, 3; PL 42, 985.

Augustine mentions is the sense of touch and it is earth which is most suited to this power.[4]

St. Augustine warns his readers against the conclusion that the power to sense lies in the body. Though the diversification of sense organs may be dependent on the diversity of elements, this does not in the least affect Augustine's view that the soul is the agent of sensation.[5] It is unthinkable to support any theory in which the body would be considered as causing any event in the soul. Such a theory would make the soul inferior to the body, but, as Augustine emphasizes, the soul is in every way superior to the body.[6] "Nor is it the body that senses but the soul through the body, which it uses as a messenger, in order to produce in itself what is announced from without."[7]

As a result of these impressions received in the more delicate parts of the body a certain joy or sorrow will follow. This joy or sorrow draws the attention of the soul and thence will follow the second phase essential to sensation, the phase of vital reaction.

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4 De Genesi ad Litteram III, 4, 6-7; PL 34, 281. The Synopsis of this theory is taken from Bourke, Augustine's Quest of Wisdom, 229.

5 Bourke, Augustine's Quest of Wisdom, 229.

6 De Genesi ad Litteram XII, 16, 33; PL 34, 467.

7 De Genesi ad Litteram XII, 17, 32; PL 34, 467.

> Accordingly, when it struggles against resistance, and experiences difficulty in controlling the material forces thrust against it, a hightened awareness results fit attentius owing to the difficulty of acting, and this attention to difficulty, when it reaches the level of consciousness, is sensation, and is described as pain or effort.[8]

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8 De Musica VI, 5, 9; PL 32, 1168. Translation by Carre, Realists and Nominalists, 13.

CHAPTER V

THE PHASE OF VITAL REACTION

The second phase of sensation may be termed the phase of vital reaction on the part of the soul. However, before the activity of the soul in this phase of sensation is described, it will be necessary to examine the animating function of the soul. On this point Augustine says: "For my part I hold that the body is only animated by the soul in a directive manner (intentione facientis)."[1] This directive animation on the part of the soul is described in De Quantitate Animae. The passages were cited in Chapter II of this paper wherein is described the relation of soul and body. In its animating function the soul preserves the body's organic unity; it is responsible for the growth, nutrition and reproduction of the body. In addition, the soul in animating the body has the task of directing its movements and its perceptions, informing and directing the sense organs.[2] As Augustine expresses it in De Musica: "the soul secretly sustains by its living the organ of hearing."[3] This is true of every other part of the body

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1 De Musica VI, 5, 9; PL 32, 1168.

2 In this famous passage Augustine enumerates seven steps or levels of the soul's power. These steps fall into three groups: in the first three steps the soul deals with body or matter, 'acting' on it successively with greater power; in the next two stages the soul has to do with itself; finally in the last two the soul goes to God and dwells in Him.

3 De Musica VI, 5, 10; PL 32, 1168.

as well. The animating function of the soul extends to the eye, the tongue, to every section of the body without exception.

The soul, then, is so closely allied to the body, in so intimate a way, that by its very nature it takes care of the body and is ever vigilant for its welfare. As a result of this care or vigilance, and this is the essential element of this phase of sensation, when the body experiences another body or force, the soul, ever attentive to the needs and welfare of the body, reacts vitally, producing a change in itself. On the occasion of the body's receiving an impression from another body or force, the soul becomes more attentive, these acts of attention appearing to the soul as pleasant when the body's functions are promoted, and disagreeable when the body's functions are frustrated.

> Now, when these influences occur which produce, so to speak, differences in the body, the soul exerts efforts of attention appropriate to each of its parts and organs, and is said to see, to hear, to smell, to taste, or to sense by touch.[4]

Should it happen that an impression on the body escapes the notice of the soul when one of the physical organs of sense in the body is malfunctioning, there would be no sensation. Sensation is had only when the vigilant soul, vitally watching throughout the body, is attentive to the modification experienced by the body. When such a change takes place in its body, the soul produces a corresponding modification in itself perfectly moulded, so to speak, on the impression of the body. The soul, as it were,

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4 Ibid.

puts forth actions which correspond to these affections in the body. It is this concentration of attention, brought about by alterations in the body, productive of a modification in the soul, that is called sensation. Living in union with its body, the attentive soul pleasurably joins its own body to the body from without, and resists with difficulty anything unsuitable which forces itself on the body.

> Therefore, although we see a body which we had not previously seen, and its image then begins to exist in our souls (by which image we remember this body when it will no longer be present to us), nevertheless it is not the body which impresses the image on the soul; it is the soul itself which produces within itself with a remarkable swiftness which far outstrips the slowness of the body. Just as soon as the body appears before the eyes, its image is formed instantaneously in the soul of the one seeing it.[5]

When the soul senses, therefore, it does not receive the impressions of the body, rather it produces actions corresponding to these impressions and it is aware of these actions in its own being. As Augustine puts it: "there is nothing absurd in believing that, when the soul senses its own movements, or actions, or operations, or however else they may be conveniently described, do not escape its attention."[6] This, then, is what is meant by sensation: when the soul is affected by an object, the soul is not affected by the body, rather it is affected by its own operations in the body.

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5 De Genesi ad Litteram XII, 16, 33; PL 34, 467. The translation is from Pegis, "The Mind of St. Augustine," Mediaeval Studies, VI, 42.

6 De Musica VI, 5, 11; PL 32, 1169.

When the soul is affected in some way by its own operations, the affection comes from itself not from the body; and this takes place when it accomodates itself to the body. For this reason the soul is less with itself, because the body is always a lesser reality than the soul.[7]

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7 Ibid., VI, 5, 12; PL 32, 1170.

CHAPTER VI

THE PHASE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

The third phase of St. Augustine's theory of sense cognition may be termed the phase of psychological organization. The vital activity of the soul in the production of sensations is, according to Augustine, the beginning of knowledge. It cannot as yet be called knowledge. In De Libero Arbitrio he points out that in addition to the reports of the separate senses, which enable the individual to know color, sould, flavor, smoothness, and so forth, there are other qualities pertaining to bodies, the qualities of being large, small, square, and round, which the individual does not perceive by any one sense. Such non-sensory perceptions are referred in the Aristotelian manner to a certain inner sense to which all things are reported from the familiar five senses.

> A. Are we able then to distinguish by any one of the senses what pertains to each, and what all or certain of the senses have in common among them?
> E. That can be distinguished in no way except by a certain interior sense...to which all things are referred from those very well known five. For the beast sees by one process by another he avoids or desires that which he perceives in seeing: for the one sense is in his eyes, but the other is within him in the soul itself;...This sense, however, cannot be called sight, nor hearing, but something else which presides over all of them in common.[1]

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1 De Libero Arbitrio II, 3, 8; PL 32, 1243. Translation by Richard McKeon, Selections from Mediaeval Philosophers, New York, 1929, 20.

This interior sense enables the individual not only to perceive the things grasped by the external senses, but also the actions of these senses. Brute animals, too, have this internal sense, and by means of it they avoid what is displeasing and pursue what is pleasing to them.

It is clear that St. Augustine was aware of the difference between bare sensation and perception. In De Quantitate Animae Augustine examines various elements of perception which are not explicitly derived from sensation. He points out the fact that perception defined as bare apprehension by the soul of what affects the body is not an adequate definition. For one thing, vision does not consist only of an immediate image in the sense organ. If vision be restricted to this, the individual would see no more than his eyes.

> If the eyes were to see only there where they are, they would see only themselves and nothing more. But since they do not see themselves, we must agree not only that they can see there where they are not, but that they can see only where they are not.[2]

The act of seeing, therefore, implies distance or spatial reference. In addition the individual perceives more than that which sight alone gives. For example, one perceives fire, though the actual image be that of smoke.

> For that fire is not seen, or heard, or smelled, or tasted, or touched by us, yet, through the sight of smoke, the soul becomes aware of the fire. While, therefore, this awareness of the soul may not be called an activity of the sense because the body has no experience of the fire, yet it is called knowledge through the sense, because the presence of

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2 De Quantitate Animae, 23, 44; PL 32, 1058.

> the fire was suspected and established from an experience which the body had, even though it was an experience of something different, that is to say, from seeing something other than the fire.[3]

It is therefore becoming increasingly clear that perception is a kind of knowledge through sensation. But perception is common to both men and brutes. Augustine suggests, for example, that Odysseus' dog, which recognised him after twenty years, displayed more than bare sensation. The fact that the dog recognised his master indicates this. The important point, however, is that the dog lacked the human characteristic of knowing that it recognised his master.

It is evident, therefore, that there are two types of perception: perception per rationem and perception per corpus. The latter type, common to men and brutes, includes more than bare sensation. The former type, perception per rationem, is proper to man. This level of knowledge is a rational level, not shared by brutes. However, it does involve the use of the senses having as its object sensible being. It is therefore a lower level of cognition than that of direct contemplation of eternal and incorporeal ideas.

The basis of this distinction is to be found in De Genesi ad Litteram XII where Augustine examines St. Paul's statement to the effect that he had been caught up to the third heaven and paradise, where he enjoyed an experience no words could describe, and that he could not decide whether he was in the body or out of the body during the time of his ecstasy.

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3 De Quantitate Animae 24, 45; PL 32, 1059.

Augustine wishes to determine the meaning of St. Paul's phrases "out of the body" and "in the body" and to discover the meaning of the "third heaven" which St. Paul saw. St. Augustine begins by defining and illustrating three types of vision: corporeal, spiritual, and intellectual. The objects of these three types are respectively: bodies, seen by the eyes; likenesses of bodies, seen by the spirit (spiritus); and immaterial essences or substances, seen by the intellect.

It is the second type of vision, "spiritual vision," which will enable one to understand what is meant by perception per rationem. The power of the soul that functions in this vision is the "spirit." St. Augustine defines the word spiritus as "a certain power of the soul inferior to the mind, wherein likenesses of corporeal objects are produced."[4] Therefore, the image or likeness of a body produced within the soul is called spiritalis imago,[5] and the process of pondering over images in the soul is described in the phrase spiritaliter cogitare.[6]

This meaning of spirit was common in the terminology of Neo-Platonic philosophy, for Augustine, in De Civitate Dei[7] attributes the distinction between spirit and intellect to Porphyry. According to Augustine,

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4 De Genesi ad Litteram XII, 9, 20; PL 34, 461.

5 Ibid., 4, 8; PL 34, 451.

6 Ibid., 11, 23; PL 34, 463.

7 De Civitate Dei X, 9; PL 41, 287.

then, *spiritus* denotes a level of cognitive consciousness, intermediate between bare sensation and pure intellection.

Gilson observes that when spiritual vision takes place along with corporeal vision, it is the ordinary functioning of reproductive imagination, or sense memory, or of cogitation in terms of images.[8]

> For when an object is seen by the eyes, an image of it is immediately produced in the spirit. But this representation is not perceived unless we remove our eyes from the object that we were gazing at through the eyes and find an image of it within our soul.[9]

In *De Musica* St. Augustine cites as an example of perception *per rationem*, the hearing of a line of verse. He is speaking here of the retentive factor in perception. Without the compresence of *spiritus* a verse could never be heard, nor for that matter, neither a word or syllable of it. A syllable is a sound of a certain duration with a beginning, middle and end. It could not be heard unless, at the end of the sensation of hearing, the memory retained its beginning as well as all the intermediate stages. Even in the briefest sensation of hearing the shortest possible syllables the memory is involved.

> Even in hearing the shortest syllable, unless memory help us have in the soul that motion made when the beginning sounded, at the very moment when no longer the beginning but the end of the syllable is sounding, we cannot say we have heard anything.[10]

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8 Gilson, *Introduction à l'Etude de saint Augustin*, Paris, 56.

9 *De Genesi ad Litteram* XII, 11, 23; PL 34, 463.

10 *De Musica* VI, 8, 21; PL 32, 1192.

Perceiving, then, is more than sensing, and human perception points beyond, to Scientia.

The further role of memory and the function of the acies animi are neither clearly nor fully worked out by St. Augustine. In De Trinitate Augustine, looking for images of the Divine Trinity, suggests the trinity of memory, internal vision, and will. Memory is described as the retention factor containing within itself the likeness of the body, after the body, which was corporeally received, is withdrawn. The purpose of memory is to retain this likeness so that the will may again direct its eye to it, in order that the visio cogitantis be fashioned from within just as the sense experienced from without, the sensible body exposed to it.

> But in place of that bodily species which was perceived from without, there succeeds the memory retaining that species which the soul absorbed through the bodily senses; and in place of that vision which was outward when the sense was formed by the sensible body there succeeds a similar vision from within, since the gaze of the mind is formed by that which the memory retains, and the bodies thought of are absent.[11]

Augustine admits of a certain unity in this so-called psychological trinity inasmuch as all the members are internal to the mind. However, all such knowledge looks outward toward bodily things and therefore Augustine says that a man interested in such things is not a good man.

In the following chapter of the same book of De Trinitate Augustine offers this proportion: what a body in place is to the bodily sense, the likeness of the body in the memory is to the gaze of the mind, and what the

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11 De Trinitate XI, 3, 6; PL 42, 988.

vision of the one perceiving is to that species of the body [by which the sense is to that species of the body] by which the sense is formed, the vision of the one cogitating is to the image of the body established in the memory, by which the gaze of the mind is formed.[12]

It should be noted here that Augustine, using the term cogitating, attaches a very special meaning to it. It is a type of thinking in which the mind gathers together various elements of its experience and makes a single grouping of them. The mind concentrates on a group of memory contents, but this activity is only a prelude to the act of understanding. This is certainly not an act of abstraction, nor of induction, "for the universal is not derived from such a grouping of memory contents, but the universal, obtained from the higher vision of eternal truth, may be applied by an intellectual judgement to such a grouping."[13]

In the ninth chapter of the same book of De Trinitate Augustine describes a series of species which successively give rise to the species in the act of cogitation. The species, or form, of the external sense object produces the species in the sense, which in turn gives rise to the species in the memory and finally the species in the memory is responsible for the species in the gaze of the one cogitating.

> In this distribution, therefore, when we begin from the species of the body and arrive finally at the species which comes into being in the vision of the one cogitating, there are found four species born, as it were, step by step one from the other...Since from the species of

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12 De Trinitate XI, 4, 7; PL 42, 989.

13 Bourke, Augustine's Quest of Wisdom, 214.

> the body which is perceived there arises that which comes to be in the sense of the one perceiving, and from this that which comes to be in the memory, and from this that which comes to be in the gaze of the one cogitating. Hence, the will combines, as it were, parent and offspring: first, the species of the body with that which it begets in the sense of the body; and that again with that which from it comes to be in the memory, and thirdly, this also with that which is begotten by it in the vision of the one cogitating.[14]

To repeat, this is not an act of abstraction in the Aristotelian or Thomistic sense. For Aristotle, general concepts are derived from sensory impressions, but such a view is foreign to Augustine. In Aristotle's account the body and the physical world act upon the soul, and, as has been pointed out previously, Augustine does not admit this. "Therefore, the last species mentioned by Augustine is not an intelligible form but merely the principle of that grouping of memory contents which is effected by cogitation."[15]

It would be interesting to know how the general notions 'inferred or assumed' in cogitation are produced. Augustine is silent on this point. His main interest is truth, and psychological analysis is, for Augustine, incidental to the problem of truth.

In this vein Professor Carre observes that he is interested, not in the formation of concepts, but in the criteria of truth contained in them.

> We do not gather a notion of the human mind in its general character by comparison, observing a number of minds with bodily eyes; we contemplate indestructible truth, by means of which we define precisely, as far as we can, not the nature of one particular man's mind, but the nature it

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14 De Trinitate XI, 9, 16; PL 42, 996.

15 Bourke, Augustine's Quest of Wisdom, 214.

ought to be according to the eternal reasons.[16]

It is assumed that general notions are entirely independent of sensible origin, in the same way as the notions of truth, coherence, equality, and number. Their content comes from 'above.' The intelligible ideas which the mind contemplates above itself are referred by the mind to the sensations and images obtained from its commerce with the body and with physical objects. It may be said that scientia is rooted in perception, but is not derived from sensations. And since scientia, the farther it advances, is increasingly concerned with the 'reasons', numbers, and forms of things, it has no need of the process of abstraction from particular sensations.

> But that capacity of ours which is concerned with the treatment of corporeal and temporal things is, indeed, rational in that it is not common to us and the beasts, but is drawn, as it were, out of that rational substance of our mind by which we are in contact with the intelligible and immutable truth, and which is deputed to handle and direct the inferior things.[17]

It is clear, then, that the perception of sensible objects is dependent on the activity of intellectual apprehension, and this in turn on eternal truth. This is in keeping with Augustine's view that the inferior is at all times subject to the superior which acts upon it. The Platonism in this analysis of knowledge is evident; Augustine is at all times reaching upward, directing his attention to the sphere of timeless entities.[18]

It would be well at this point to examine St. Augustine's general

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16 De Trinitate IX, 6, 9; PL 42, 966.

17 Ibid., XII, 3, 3; PL 42, 999.

18 Carre, Realists and Nominalists, 18.

attitude toward the senses and the things of sense. In this matter his outlook is markedly Platonic in character. He depreciates the objects of sense in comparison with eternal and immaterial realities, while at the same time almost grudgingly admitting that knowledge of sensible things is a practical necessity of life. Like Plato he insists on increasing purification of soul from the slavery of the senses. But, it should be remembered, Augustine did not adopt Platonism and nothing more. Certainly he uses Platonic themes, but his interest is primarily the attainment of man's supernatural end, beatitude, in the possession and vision of God.[19]

> Reason. There is only one thing that I can command you; I know no more. These things of sense must be forsaken entirely, and, as long as we bear this body, we must have care lest our wings be entangled by their sticky lime.[20]

> But truth is far removed from the minds of the vain men who, having gone too far in these corporeal things, mistakenly think nothing else exists except what they perceive with the five well known messengers of the body.[21]

His attitude is clear: man should avoid becoming absorbed in the temporal and changing things of sense, rather he should concentrate on the eternal realities above himself. He does not, however, entirely disparage the objects of the senses, for, as was pointed out in the first chapter of this paper, the visible things of this world would eventually lead him to God.

In connection with his remarks on the value of the things of sense,

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19 Copleston, History of Philosophy, II, 58.

20 Soliloquia I, 14, 24; PL 32, 874.

21 De Utilitate Credendi, 1, 1; PL 42, 63.

Augustine offers some interesting observations on phantasias and phantasms.

> Then whatever this memory contains from the motions of the mind brought to bear on the passions of the body are called phantasiai in Greek... And the life of opinion consists in having them instead of things known and things perceived, and such a life is at the very entrance of error ...images of images, to which we give the name phantasms. For my father I have often seen and know, in one way, and my grandfather I have never seen, another way. The first of these is a phantasia, the other phantasm. The first I find in my memory, the last in that motion of my mind born of those the memory has...The only ground for all false opinions is to hold phantasias or phantasms for things known, known by the senses.[22]

It would be interesting at this point to examine St. Augustine's doctrine on number, especially in connection with knowledge of sensible objects. Number apparently had a fascination for Augustine, for he frequently introduces the notion of number in his writings. When reason searches the heavens and the earth, it finds that beauty alone is pleasing. What pleases in beauty is form; in form, proportion; and in proportion, number.[23] Number is not only an aesthetic constituent, but is present in all things.[24]

In the sixth book of De Musica Augustine offers a remarkable analysis of auditory sensation. He takes as his example the hearing of the first line of St. Ambrose's hymn: Deus Creator omnium. Hearing this line one recognizes that it is rhythmic and that the numbers constituting its four

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22 De Musica VI, 11, 32; PL 32, 1185. Translated by Robert Taliaferro, Writings of Saint Augustine, The Fathers of the Church, New York, 1947, 357.

23 De Ordine II, 15, 42; PL 32, 1014.

24 De Libero Arbitrio II, 11, 31; PL 32, 1258.

iambics and twelve beats are (a) in the sould heard, (b) in the sense of the hearer, (c) in the activity of the one pronouncing, (d) in the memory, (e) in the natural judgment of the sense of hearing. These five classes of numbers are carefully examined to see whether any one kind can exist without the other.

Sound itself has number even when no hearer is present. Numbers in the sense of the hearer last as long as the sound lasts and cannot exist without the sounding numbers. Numbers in the activity of the reciter have no need of the numbers in sound or in the act of hearing. These numbers, produced by the soul in its operations, have no need of the other numbers so far mentioned. The numbers in the memory, although formed on the basis of the numbers heard or thought, can exist without them. This can be seen from the fact that even in silence certain numbers can be executed in the time-pauses with which they would be executed by the voice.

The numbers in the natural judgment of sense are not received from without or from reason, and if there were no numbers in the sense of hearing it could not be pleased with harmony or displeased with discord. That very thing by which there is agreement or disapproval, is called the number of that sense. When a sound is heard, the power of approving or disapproving is not produced in the ears which are opened to both good and bad sounds. A numbered sound affects the organ of hearing possessing numbers. That accounts for the approval of harmony and the rejection of discord. The natural power, judicial as it were, present within the ear does not cease to exist in silence, nor does sound bring it in but is rather received by it to be approved or condemned. This kind of number is in the natural judgment of the one

experiencing sound whereby he is pleased with the equality of numbers or displeased by their defect.

Augustine calls these numbers: (a) sounding numbers (sonantes), for the physical vibrations in the air are capable of numerical measurement; (b) hearing numbers (occursores), rhythms in the auditory sense of the hearer; (c) pronouncing numbers (progressores), the rhythmic modulation of the voice of the speaker; (d) memory numbers (recordabiles), the rhythms contained in the memory after the previous numbers have ceased; (e) judicial numbers (judiciales), by means of these numbers man is able to judge that a verse is rhythmic.

In determining the order of their importance Augustine uses the principle that making is superior to the made and that which judges is superior to that which is judged. In this way he arrives at the conclusion that the judicial numbers would be first, followed by the pronouncing, hearing, memory, and sounding numbers. It is evident from what has been said about the nature of sensation why corporeal and inanimate sounding numbers are ranked lowest.

The next question is whether all of these numbers perish and pass away or whether some are lasting. He is not quite sure that he should say that the judicial numbers are immortal, but he is very definite in saying that the other four types of numbers are mortal. Therefore, he searches further to discover whether anything more excellent than the judicial numbers can be found in the human soul. He decides that there is a sixth set of numbers, which he calls the numbers in the reason of man, or simply rational numbers (rationales). The reason that Augustine offers for this statement

is based on the fact that the verdict, as it were, of the judicial numbers is evaluated by other more hidden numbers. The judicial numbers take delight in the verse, but to be delighted by sense and to evaluate by reason are not one and the same thing. Reason which is placed over this delectation cannot rightly judge of the numbers below it without these numbers of reason. This sixth kind of numbers should rightly be called judicial and all the others sensuous. The sensual-judicial numbers produce the awareness of pleasure or displeasure, whereas the judicial numbers of reason evaluate this sensuous awareness. Augustine has no hesitation in calling this highest kind of numbers eternal and immutable. Their only possible source is the eternal and immutable God.[25]

It is true then that number, proportion, and unity in sensible objects can be appreciated by the mind. When the soul knows some sensible object it is assimilated in its harmony of number to the experiences of the body by some corporeal object or force. Applying the threefold division of sense knowledge to Augustine's theory of numbers it is suggested that in the phase of corporeal reception the sounding numbers constitute the occasion of the bare sensation. These numbers do not act on the soul, for sensation is never passive rather it is an activity of the soul. Reacting against the physical impact of sound are the hearing numbers, or, as some commentators translate, confronting numbers. In the act of hearing, numbers are not

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25 This presentation of St. Augustine's theory of numbers is taken in great part from Emmanuel Chapman's Saint Augustine's Philosophy of Beauty, New York, 1939, 13.

produced in the soul by those which are perceived in sound. For the soul cannot be subjected to the body working and imposing numbers on it. In the second phase the soul reacts vitally; it becomes aware of the experiences of its body, because of the difficulty itself experiences towards action. The pronouncing, or active numbers react to what is happening to the body, making the soul attentive to its own operation. And finally in the third phase the successive sensations produced by the soul are recorded in the form of memory numbers to give a continuous, whole image, calling on the judicial numbers to take delight in or suffer pain.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The concluding section of this paper will be devoted to the task of summarising what has been said of St. Augustine's doctrine of knowledge through the senses, followed by a suggestion as to the situating of his doctrine on knowledge [through the senses, followed by a suggestion as to the situating of his doctrine] in the context of his whole philosophy, and ending with a brief examination of the influence of his doctrine on later mediaeval philosophers.

If one were to ask for St. Augustine's epitome of philosophy, the response would undoubtedly be given in Augustine's own words: "Nulla est homini causa philosophandi nisi ut beatus sit."[1] This passage indicates a definite purpose behind all his philosophical investigation. Augustine was seeking truth, not as a system of philosophy to be studied, elaborated, and refined with numberous subtleties, but as something personally needed in his own life. He himself had realized the danger and despair of skepticism and was aware of the need of a philosophy to escape these dangers.

The search for a philosophy in which he would possess the truth, came to an end with the discovery of the Platonists and the Neo-Platonists.

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1 De Civitate Dei XIX, 1; PL 41, 398.

In the Contra Academicos he admits his debt to the men of these schools: "After many centuries and many disputes at length a system of philosophy was discovered which in my opinion is most true. It is not what our sacred religion so rightly abhors, a philosophy of the material world, but reveals another and intelligible world."[2]

It will be noticed that a distinction has been made between Platonism and Neo-Platonism as influencing factors in Augustine's development. Of these two the greater influence was Neo-Platonism, fur during Augustine's time "there was very little known of the actual philosophy of Plato himself."[3] Besides the Phaedo in which Plato examines the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and the Timaeus, Plato's explanation of creation, very little of Plato was available. It is known that Augustine read these works of Plato in the translation of Victorinus.

It was, however, the writings of the Neo-Platonists that made the greatest impression on Augustine, especially the writings of Plotinus.[4] He became acquainted with Plotinus' writings at Milan in the two years before his conversion, at the time he was acquiring a deeper knowledge of Christianity. During this period he read a few of the treatises of the Enneads, certainly I, 6, On the Beautiful, and probably V, 5, On the Three Chief Hypotheses,

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2 Contra Academicos III, 19, 42; PL 32, 956.

3 Lawrence Jansen, "The Divine Ideas in the writings of St. Augustine," The Modern Schoolman, XXII, March, 1945.

4 Etienne Gilson, God and Philosophy, New Haven, 1941.

in the Latin translation of Victorinus. After his conversion he read more of the Enneads some commentators suggesting that perhaps he read them in the original Greek.[5] But it was the first impact of Plotinus' thought at Milan which was the decisive one. What impressed him deeply and did more than anything else to prepare the way intellectually for his conversion was the great degree of agreement which he found between the teachings of Plotinus and that of the Scriptures as explained by St. Ambrose, particularly the gospel of St. John. It was their agreement that God is Spirit and altogether immaterial, as Plotinus so well explains, which liberated him from Manichean materialism.

Shortly after his conversion, and probably at the actual time, he was clearly aware of certain fundamental differences between Plotinian Neo-Platonism and Christianity. Augustine speaks of these differences and the relation of his own thought to that of Plotinus in the Confessiones.[6] But he never abandoned the view that there was a great measure of agreement between Plotinus and Christian doctrine and for this reason was ready to allow his thought to be influenced by Plotinus in many important ways, within clearly defined limits set by the authority of Scripture interpreted by Tradition. Speaking of his debt to the Neo-Platonists, he says of them:

> They saw indeed the fixed, lasting, and indefectable truth, where abide all the forms of all creaturely things; but they saw it from afar; they

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5 A. H. Armstrong, Introduction to Ancient Philosophy, Westminster, Maryland, 1949, 208.

6 Confessiones VII, 9, 10; PL 32, 740.

> saw, but their camping ground lay in error; and so to that mighty, ineffable, and blissful possession they found not the way.[7]

The basic difference between Plotinus and Augustine is to be found in their approach to natural theology. According to Augustine and all Christians there is a dividing line between God on the one side, One in a Trinity of a single, self-existing substance, and on the other side, all that which, because it has but a received existence, is not God — between God and all that is created by God. According to Plotinus the dividing line runs between the One and all that is begotten by the One. Since nothing can beget itself, what the One begets has to be other than the One; therefore, it must of necessity be multiple. This applies even to the Intellect which is the highest Plotinian god. The Plotinian dividing line thus cuts off the One, who is the only unbegotten principle, from all the begotten multiplicity, that is to say, from all the rest. In all the rest are to be found the Intellect, who is the first god, followed by the supreme Soul, who is the second god, then all the other gods including the human souls.

Thus at the outset there is a radical difference in the views of the two men. And for Augustine there is this added difficulty: how to bridge the infinite metaphysical chasm between "Him who is" and man, the creature, a difficulty which Plotinus did not encounter. Augustine thought he solved the difficulty when he read the gospel of St. John into the Enneads of Plotinus, for he saw that the soul of man, though it "bears witness of the light," yet itself "is not that light, but the Word of God, being God, is

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7 Sermo CXLI; PL 38, 804.

that true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."[8]

When Augustine turned to the task of describing man he found himself in a rather awkward position. For, in inheriting the philosophical world of Plato, he had fallen heir to Plato's man. Now, man according to Plato, was not a substantial union of body and soul; he was essentially a soul. Therefore, instead of saying that man has a soul, it would be more correct to say that man is a soul, that is to say, an intelligent intelligible, and eternally living substance, which, though it happens to be conjoined to a body, has always existed before it and is ultimately destined to outlive it. In Plato's own words, man is "a soul using a body,"[9] but he is no more his body than a worker is the tool he uses.[10] The crux of the difficulty is this: according to Plato and also Plotinus, to be a purely intelligible, living, and immaterial substance was to be a god. Human souls are then so many gods. Augustine, of course, knew that this was untrue, because in a Christian philosophy, man in no way belongs to the divine order.[11] He believed, as every Christian does, that the whole man is not soul only, but a composite of soul and body. The reasons set forth in the second chapter of this paper make this sufficiently clear.

Augustine does not, like the Aristotelians, define the soul as the form of the body, but, like the Platonists, sees it as a separate, independent

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8 John 1, 7-9.

9 Plato, Alcibiades, 129e-130c. Translated by B. Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, Vol. IV, Boston, 549.

10 Gilson, God and Philosophy, 56.

11 Excepting "deification" through grace.

and complete spiritual substance, though adapted by God to the function of using and ruling a body which distinguishes it from other spirits. He defines man as a rational soul using, or ruling, or simply having a body. In sense knowledge Augustine maintains that the soul acts in a Platonic and not in an Aristotelian manner, that is, it perceives the knowable object actively, and does not, like the Aristotelian soul, passively receive impressions from which by an elaborate process, it abstracts its concepts. The soul for the Platonists and for Augustine is never passive and is never really affected by the body. It is always active and dominant, using the body and its sense organs for its own purposes.

It is evident that St. Augustine's account of perception is determined by the nature of the soul and its relation to the body. The soul is wholly different in substance from the body. In comparison to the body, it is simple, while being present as a whole everywhere throughout the body. For Augustine, the body belongs entirely to the physical order. Its parts change and decay. Augustine insists, in contrasting the two substances, that the soul is always active, the body always passive. As a result of this view it is impossible to consider the body as making any impression on the soul, as though the soul were subject to the body. For, what acts is always more excellent than that which it acts on. The soul, active as it is, animates a completely passive body.

It follows from this that Augustine is forced to adopt an "active" theory of sensation. The best summary of this theory is his own as outlined in <u>De Musica</u>.

> Briefly, it seems to me that the soul, when it is sensing in the body, does not passively undergo anything from the body, but the soul pays more attention to the passions of the body and these [passive] activities, which may be easy because of their agreement with the body, or difficult because of their disagreement, do not escape the soul: and this is the complete explanation of sensation.[12]

As Augustine explains sensation, it is an action of the soul itself, performed when the soul, in its vigilant guidance of the body, notices some modification in the condition of the body. When, owing to some obstruction, there is an enhancement of effort, the sensation becomes conscious. But the essential part of the theory is that the independence of the two orders is strictly maintained. The soul watches over the manages the body, observing the impressions which fall upon it. Some it ignores; a mass of them it reproduces from its own substance and informs the body's sense organs with these elementary reproductions. The images or impressions of bodies are fashioned by the soul from its own substance. Thus Augustine says: "It is not the body that feels, but the soul through the body, which it uses as a messenger in order to produce within itself what is announced outside."

Theses sensory elements cannot be considered the primary entities of knowledge, for in De Libero Arbitrio Augustine points out that in addition to the information of the separate sense which give the individual the sensations of color, sound, flavor, smell and smoothness, there are other qualities pertaining to the forms of bodies, such as the quality of

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12 De Musica VI, 5, 10; PL 32, 1169, tr. Bourke, Augustine's Quest of Wisdom, III.

being large or small, which are not perceived by any one sense. These non-sensory perceptions are referred by Augustine to "a certain inner sense to which all things are reported from the five senses."[13] This common interior sense is present in animals and it is through this sense that an animal avoids what is harmful or pursues what is useful to it.

In De Quantitate Animae Augustine examines various elements of perception which are not derived from sensation. In this discussion he first defines sensation as bare apprehension by the soul of what affects the body. Sensum puto esse non latere animam quod patitur corpus.[14] Augustine immediately points out that if non latere animam means an isolated mental element certain difficulties will arise. He shows that vision does not consist only of an immediate image in the sense organ. It must include more than this if the individual is to see more than his eyes, for distance or spatial reference is implied in the act of seeing. In addition one perceives more than that which sight alone gives. For example, one perceives fire though the actual image be that of smoke alone. Perception, then, is a kind of knowledge through sensation. In addition to the image which reproduces the impression on the organs of the body, something else is presumed or inferred. Augustine cites the fact of growth as an example of something not known by sensation. "It is one thing to see nails longer, another to know that they grow."[15] It is therefore necessary to alter the definition somewhat.

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13 De Libero Arbitrio II, 7, 8; PL 32, 1249.

14 De Quantitate Animae, 23; PL 32, 1058.

15 De Quantitate Animae, 23, PL 32, 1058.

As Carre expresses it: "There is a sensum...which is an impression on the body of which the mind is barely (per se) aware without the intervention of any other factor. Every impression on the body of which the mind is barely aware is this sensum, but every sensum is not simply this."[16]

It is therefore necessary to distinguish two types of perceptions: perceptio per rationem and perceptio per corpus. Even the latter which is common to men and animals includes more than bare apprehension. And human perception points beyond, so scientia. Augustine did not clearly or fully develope these suggestions. They simply indicate the formal characteristics of elementary knowledge and, for Augustine, this is merely a step in his ascent to reality.

The next phase of the development of knowledge — general ideas — is still more summarily treated. The problem of abstraction and recognition of common qualities for the purpose of predication does not arise for Augustine. He speaks at length of the way in which the images of things perceived by the senses are retained in the memory. Sensation reproduces the species of corporeal things, and these images are formed in the memory. Finally, the visio cogitantis is formed from the memory images. There is no hint of abstraction in the Aristotelian sense, by which general concepts are derived from sense impressions, to be found in his writings.

On the one hand, sensation is necessary for knowledge of things. On the other, sensory perception implies general notions. But beyond this,

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16 Carre, Realists and Nominalists, 16.

it must be admitted, it is difficult to discover any further psychological account. As Gilson observes, psychological analysis is, for Augustine, incidental to the problem of truth.[17] It is from this point of view that his references to general ideas must be interpreted.

The question of the relationship of sense knowledge to the philosophy of Augustine as a whole may be summed up in this manner: it is part of a vast proof for the existence of God. In order to understand this, one must recall Augustine's attitude toward knowledge. It is to be sought, not for purely academic purposes, but in order to possess true happiness, true beatitude. Man feels his insufficiency; he reaches out to an object greater than himself, an object which can bring peace and happiness, and knowledge of that object is an essential condition of its attainment. He sees knowledge in the function of an end, happiness. It is only the wise man that can be truly happy and wisdom postulates a knowledge of the truth. In De Beata Vita Augustine says that no one is happy who does not possess what he strives to possess, so that one who is seeking truth but has not yet found it, cannot be said to be truly happy.[18] Augustine himself sought for truth and for him this meant Christ and Christian Wisdom.

In various works St. Augustine outlines his ascent to God. In De Libero Arbitrio he describes the starting point: that man is at least certain of his own existence. With existence Augustine couples life and

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17 Gilson, Introduction a l'Etude de saint Augustin, 217.

18 De Beata Vita, 2, 10; PL 32, 964.

understanding, for the fact of existence would not be evident unless he were alive, and it is clear to him that he understands both the fact of his existence and the fact that he is living. This is the foundation for the ascent to God. Man has certainty of this from inner experience, from self-consciousness. Augustine next examines corporeal objects. He was well aware of the fact that man is able to deceive himself in his judgments concerning the objects of sense and he knew that objects apprehended by the sense did not constitute the proper objects of the human intellect. Nevertheless, he regarded these corporeal objects as an extra-mental starting point of the soul's ascent to God. It is true that objects of sense are essentially mutable and are far less adequate manifestations of God than the soul itself, yet man is dependent on the senses for much of his knowledge, and Augustine did not, by any means, adopt a purely skeptical attitude toward such objects.

Through its bodily senses the soul has the power of perceiving physical objects; it is able to know itself, and things which though like bodies are not themselves corporeal, and finally it is able to know objects which are neither bodies nor like bodies. These are the next steps in Augustine's ascent. The entire trend of Augustine's analysis of knowledge is toward the region of immutable certainty. The relativity of sense perception requires the regulative power of thought or judgment, and that which judges is always superior to that which is judged. The soul corrects the impressions of the senses, such as the bent appearance of an oar in water, by reference to a reality, the physical object, which is known by thought. When the mind judges the truth of appearances, it constantly appeals

to principles which are untouched by the mutability of visible things. The exploration of these principles leads to the discovery of an intelligible structure in the world.

To approach these principles one must be able to recognize, through judgment, certain criteria. A favorite example of Augustine is the class of mathematical ideas, principles of order, rhythm, and symmetry. Mathematical ideas are types of being which are not subject to change; they are certain; they are not dependent on the nature of the mind which approaches them.

> The reason and truth of number is present to all who reason, so that every computer individually tries to apprehend it with his reason and understanding; and one can do it rather easily, another with more difficulty, still another can not do it at all: although notwithstanding it offers itself equally to all who can grasp it; nor when perceived by any one is it changed or altered for the nutriment, as it were, of its perceiver; nor does it cease when some one is deceived in it, but he is so much the more in error the less he sees it, while it remains true and whole.[19]

Seven and three are ten, not only now but always. He points out too, that in mathematical calculations it is possible to transcend space and time and predict results to infinity. "Whence do we perceive this, then," Augustine asks, "for no one has perceived all the numbers by any sense of the body. . . by what apparition is so certain a truth of numbers to be contemplated so faithfully through countless numbers except by an interior light which the corporeal senses do not know?"[20]

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19 De Libero Arbitrio II, 8, 20; PL 32, 1251.

20 De Libero Arbitrio ii, 8, 23; PL 32, 1253, tr. Richard McKeon, Selections from Medieval Philosophers, New York, 1929, 38.

Mathematical ideas, then, are one class of realities—and "there are many such things"[21]—which are not inventions of the mind, which are free of space and time and which reveal a logical system of relations which are necessary. Because they are non-sensory they are discovered by a process of mind which independent of sense perception.

What does the perception of sensory objects have to do with the apprehension of these ideas? From what has been said before concerning sensation, it is clear that the soul has no direct awareness of bodies through the senses; if forms images of them from within itself. Through the shadows of these corporeal images the intellect discerns the immutable forms which constitute the reality of things. The sensory image is an aid to the mind in the intellectual apprehension of the unchanging form. For man's thought does not dwell, for example, on the incorporeal and immutable form of a square body in the same way as that form itself remains in it, if indeed the mind could have arrived at the form apart from the image of enclosed space.[22] Thus the mind is helped to the intellectual apprehension of the forms by the perception of sensible things.

In this sphere the forms point to a Supreme Form.

> Doubt not that, in order that these mutable things may not be checked in their course, but by measured motions and by distinctive varity of forms bring time to a close like a poem's ending, there must be some eternal and immutable Form, which is neither extended nor varied in time, and through which all mutable things can receive a form and

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21 Ibid., II, 8, 20; PL 32, 1251.

22 De Trinitate XII, 14, 23; PL 42, 1011, trans. Carre, Realists and Nominalists, 26.

> according to their kind fulfill and accomplish their ordered rhythms in space and time.[23]

In this way Augustine has reached the goal to which all his explorations of the degrees of knowledge have tended. The norms of truth by which the mind judges, whether in the realm of nature or of goodness or of beauty, point to an absolute region of the spirit. Entering this region he finds Him whom he had sought.

A passage from the Confessiones sums up the doctrine perfectly.

> Thus by stages I passed from bodies to the soul which uses the body for its perceiving, and from this to the soul's inner power, to which the body's senses present external things, as indeed the beasts are able; and from there I passed on to the reasoning power, to which is referred for judgment what is received from the body's senses. This too realised that it was mutable in me, and rose to its own understanding. It withdrew my thought from its habitual ways, abstracting from the confused crowds of phantasms that it might find what light suffused it, when with utter certainty it cried aloud that the immutable was to be preferred to the mutable, and how it had come to know the immutable itself: for if it had not come to some knowledge of the immutable, it could not have known it as certainly preferable to the mutable. Thus in the thrust of a trembling glance my mind arrived at That Which Is.[24]

In this connection it would be well to note Gilson's observation that in the thought of St. Augustine there is really one long proof of God's existence, a proof which consists of various stages. Starting with the initial doubt and its refutation through the Si fallor, sum, the soul proceeds to consider the sensible world. But it does not discover in this world the truth which it seeks, and so it turns inward, where, after considering

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23 De Libero Arbitrio II, 16, 44; PL 32, 1264.

24 Confessiones VII, 17, 23; PL 32, 746, trans. Frank Sheed, Confessions of St. Augustine, New York, 1943, 149.

its own mutability, it discovers changeless truth which transcends the soul and does not depend on the soul. Thus it is led to God.[25] This view is confirmed by a passage in one of Augustine's sermons where he shows the human soul questioning the things of sense and hearing them confess that the beauty of the visible world is the creation and reflection of changeless Beauty, after which the soul proceeds inwards, discovers itself and realizes the superiority of the soul to the body. "Men saw these two things, pondered them, investigated them both, and found that each is mutable in man." The mind, therefore, finding both body and soul to be mutable goes in search of what is immutable. "And thus they arrived at a knowledge of God the Creator by means of the things which He has created."[26]

The view of St. Augustine on the relation of soul and body exercised a profound influence over subsequent medieval and later Catholic thought, and it is the same with regard to his theory of sense knowledge. An emphasis on the spiritual side of man as distinct from the material side is to be found throughout his writings. Particularly noteworthy is the sentence concluding the ninth book of the Confessiones. He had just given a touching account of his mother's illness and now significantly ends: "That holy and devout soul was freed from its body." Ever since St. Paul found the "law of his members fighting against the law of his spirit" and asked that he be released "from the body of this death," Christian asceticism had emphasized

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25 Gilson, Introduction a l'Etude de saint Augustine, 49.

26 Sermo, 241, 2, 2 and 3, 3; PL 38, 1133.

the superiority of the soul over the body. It may be said that St. Augustine's treatment of the topic exercised a deep, albeit perhaps indirect, influence upon spiritual writers like St. Ignatius, who bids the exercitant in his Spiritual Exercises "consider our soul in this corruptible body, as it were in a prison." The theme runs through almost all of Christian ascetical thought.[27]

For approximately two centuries after the death of Augustine no progress was achieved in the study of sense knowledge. There are several figures whose works are little worth noting who intervened chronologically between Augustine and John Scotus Eriugena. Nemesius of Edessa was a psychologist, a contemporary of St. Augustine. Claudianus Mamertus wrote De Statu Animae; St. John Damascene presented De Fide Orthodoxa; Alcuin produced De Ratione Animae. But the philosophical aspect of the question of sense knowledge was largely ignored. Even in the chapter on De Anima in the encyclopedia of Rhaban Maur one finds the significant observation, "There is little to be said concerning the functions of the five senses." Real study of the problem was resumed only by John Scotus Eriugena.

Scotus is in many respects a Neo-Platonist, and he refers to Plato as the "Greatest of Philosophers." He believes with Plato that the soul is the principle of human activity, and of sensation as well.[28] He says little

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27 McMaspy, "Augustine on Sensation," The Modern Schoolman, XV, 8.

28 Eriugena, De Divisione Naturae, 3, 36; PL 122, 729, trans. Jerome Ledvina, A Philosophy and Psychology of Sensation, Washington, 1948, 8.

else than that the sense is perceptive merely of the phenomena, the appearances of the world.[29] But he insists that the sense is a simple and uniform faculty of the soul having five corporeal instruments or organs. It is a messenger, an *internuncius*.[30] He alludes to Augustine's theory of sense images. But for Scotus sense images are likenesses of objects received by the external senses; they are not the same as the impressions but result from the impressions. The organs do not contribute to the formation of images; that function is filled by the soul.

Like Augustine, Eriugena regarded the objects as the material *ex qua* the images are gathered; they are taken from the objects by the sense. Therefore the union between the objects and the subjects in sensation is affected not at all by the role of the object, but by the activity of the sense power which extends to the object.

In summary it might be said that Eriugena made no definite improvements on the doctrine of sensation as found in Augustine, but he did contribute to the strengthening of the influence of Greek Neo-Platonism.

Another medieval writer who shows the influence of Augustine is St. Anselm. He too inherited the Neo-Platonic view that body and soul are not substantially united. The soul is the efficient cause of all bodily activity and the body is only a necessary instrument of the soul. This rather pre-conditions his theory of sensation to one strongly Augustinian;

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29 *Ibid.*, 2, 24; PL 122, 569.

30 *Ibid.*, 2, 23; PL 122, 569-70.

but nowhere does he formulate a positive, complete, systematized explanation of the process of sense knowledge. St. Anselm's interest in sensation occupies only a secondary position: it is the theory of intellectual knowledge which he develops in much more detail. But this distinction is clear: truth resides formally in the intellect[31] not in the senses. Nevertheless Anselm did not underestimate the importance of sense activity, for he regards it as a necessary condition for knowledge of material objects.

The Augustinian tradition enjoyed the status of orthodoxy in the Schools, but after Anselm few improvements were made upon it. Some years later, however, a follower of this school, having come in contact with some of the works of the Arabians and the corrupted text of Aristotle, reaffirmed the solution of Anselm and Augustine. William of Auvergne may be considered important in so far as he maintained the tradition despite a familiarity with the progress made by the Arabs in the problem of sense knowledge.

His psychology is Platonic throughout: body and soul are complete, independent substances. The body is the vessel containing the soul, and it is maintained in union with the soul by the contact of power; he says that the rational or human soul is an active substance considered active both in itself and in its relation to the body. The organs of the body are mere instruments used by the soul for the achievement of the perfection of the powers in it. Sensation essentially is not something of the body, but rather an emanation from the soul, even though the soul uses the sense organs of

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31 Anselm, De Veritate, 6; PL 158, 474.

the body. He says that this kind of power does not reduce itself to actuality by itself alone; it needs an instrument for seeing or hearing. The soul acts in the completion of the act of sensation, just as it does in the operations of judgment and reasoning. Stimulation of the sense organ is only the occasion, not the efficient cause of sense knowledge.

St. Bonaventure, in his psychology of sensation, as well as in other phases of his philosophy, is a close follower of St. Augustine. He was a great champion of tradition, and, therefore, did not radically depart from the accepted teaching of the Augustinian school.

In regard to the content of the soul's knowledge of sensible objects, Bonaventure affirms that it is dependent on sense perception. He agrees with Aristotle that the soul of itself has neither knowledge nor species of sensible objects. The human intellect is created in a state of 'nudity' and is dependent on the senses and the imagination. The sensible object acts on the sense organ and produces in it a sensible species, which in turn acts on the faculty of sensation, and then perception takes place. It will be noted that Bonaventure, in admitting a passive element in sensation, departs from the teaching of St. Augustine; but at the same time he holds that the faculty of sensation or sensitive power of the soul judges the content of sensation, the passive reception of the species being attributed primarily to the organ, the activity of the judgment to the faculty. This judgment is not a reflective judgment, it is rather a spontaneous awareness; but it is possible because the faculty of sensation is the sensitive faculty of a rational soul, for it is the soul which communicates to the body the

act of sensation.[31]

The influence of Augustine's theory on modern thought is not important. But the modern reader of Augustine cannot fail to be impressed by the striking analogies between his psychological method and that of contemporary psychologists. Both offer what might be called the experimental approach, as is evident in his treatment of the phenomena of attention and inattention.

> We sometimes do not hear people speaking near us, not because the soul is not active, but because the strength of the impression is lessened by the attention of the soul being focused on some other object. But if the impression remains, it will remain in the memory, so that we sense and realize that we sense.[32]

Thus, it might be maintained, Augustine's theory accounts for certain psychological phenomena, like the activity of the sub-conscious mind. On the other hand, if it may have been the occasion of error to certain lesser philosophers who misunderstood his system, it has been found to be in reality greatly removed from innatism, occasionalism, and other psychological heterodoxies. But perhaps most important of all, it gives the student of Augustinian thought a definite insight into his view on the constitution of the human composite, a view built upon sound psychological and philosophical bases, with empirical rather than purely dialectical foundations. Noli foras ire, Augustine advised, in te ipsum redi.[33]

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31 Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. II, 283.

32 De Musica VI, 8, 21; PL 32, 1174, trans. McNaspy, "Augustine on Sensation," The Modern Schoolman, XV, 9.

33 McNaspy, "Augustine on Sensation," The Modern Schoolman, XV, 9.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Daniel M. O'Malley, O.S.M. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Feb. 19, 1952
Date

J. J. O'Callaghan, S.J.
Signature of Adviser